Opinion
Letters to the Editor



by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

October 24, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Following are NCR reader responses to recent news articles, opinion columns and theological essays with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

Bishop Barron's episcopate

Michael Sean Winters offered his opinions on the ten candidates nominated for the next USCCB President (NCR, Oct. 17, 2025). In the letter, he maintained that

"[Barron's] heart is in his Word on Fire ministry and not in diocesan leadership." This is a gross mischaracterization. Mr. Winter's statement reveals vincible ignorance on the part of the author that could be rectified simply by viewing diocesan social media. While the Diocese of Winona-Rochester's media do not have the following of Word on Fire, it does reveal Bishop Barron's involvement in and solicitude for the Diocese of Winona-Rochester. For example:

In the course of three-plus years, Bishop Barron has visited most of the eighty-eight parishes in the diocese, many multiple times. He has made numerous separate pastoral visits, and has journeyed, time and again, from end to end of this sprawling diocese, presiding at confirmations, installations of pastors, special liturgies, days of reflection, parish events, and more. In regard to administration, Bishop Barron attends all meetings himself and he has visited, on numerous occasions, our four Catholic High Schools and twenty-four Catholic elementary schools. Furthermore, he serves on the board of St. Mary's University, the Catholic university in our diocese.

Moreover, upon his arrival in Minnesota, Bishop Barron called for and organized a Eucharistic Congress in Mankato, which was attended by five thousand people, the largest gathering of Catholics in the history of the Winona-Rochester diocese. Two years ago, Bishop Barron secured the funding for, and presided over the construction of, a new chancery office in Rochester. And this past year, Bishop Barron presided over a diocesan synod on evangelization and vocations.

(Fr.) WILLIAM THOMPSON, Vicar General of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester
Rochester, Minnesota

***



Dilexi te poses tough questions

Thank you for your cogent and spirited editorial on Pope Leo XIV's seminal apostolic exhortation, Dilexi te (NCR, Oct. 10, 2025). One hesitates to use the hackneyed phrase "timely and prophetic" to describe both pieces, but given the incessant onslaught on the poor and especially directed at immigrants, women, and people of color since a vengeful President Trump returned to power, the phrase is nearly unavoidable. For the Pope has starkly announced that to continue to skirt what Isaiah called "grinding the face of the poor" is no longer acceptable.

The editorial also posed a number of blunt rhetorical questions a close reading of Dilexi te necessitates. Two seem especially germane: "First, "Will a true and unrelenting focus on the poor change the nature of the church itself?" And relatedly, second, "What would it mean to take on the structures that create poverty?" Such queries matter because, as the editorial suggests, long established policies and structures within the Catholic Church suggest an ambiguity vis-a-vis the most vulnerable in our midst. Will Catholicism, from top to bottom, suddenly become an oppositional religion, standing firmly against uber-bourgeois policies and practices that typify contemporary Western societies? Moreover, can a single apostolic exhortation, however powerful, compel a largely moribund, complicit United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) — and the faithful it supposedly leads, to turn the musty words preferential option for the poor into a renewed and operationalized core value? Such a shift would indeed require a sea change.

Yet clearly something must be done. And urgently. The growing impoverishment of American society, a stark trend exacerbated by waning diversity, equity, and

inclusion (DEI) initiatives, the waning of affordable groceries and healthcare, and wholesale governmental firings, is spawning a tsunami of human suffering, and all undergirded by a virulent authoritarianism. In such a crisis, any religion worth its oats, despite the risks, must choose whom it will minister to and defend. If not now, when?

R. JAY ALLAIN
Orleans, Massachusetts

***

Advertisement

Dilexi te calls Church to conversion

Our church has a reputation, not entirely undeserved, for catering to certain interests in light of the depth of their financial influences. The editorial on Dilexi Te addresses that issue without equivocation and that was both reaffirming and a pleasure to read (NCR, Oct. 10, 2025). Pope Leo appears to be addressing in all candor the issue which confronts our modern church and particularly the nature of the American Catholic Church which seems to have followed its own path for far too long.

In the recent past some members of the church hierarchy in this country resisted expansion of the federal social safety net due to one or another issue none of which was essential to the intent of the expansion and which involved individual choices when invoked. The appearance was one of resistance to new programs which aided the poor due to animus from sectors of the population which either were reflexively opposed to programs sponsored by Democrats or due to resistance to additional expenditures which high income earners reflexively oppose.

Several popes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries supported programs to assist the poor but Pope Francis and Pope Leo were the strongest advocates. That advocacy for the poor might, arguably, have been the impetus for some conservative elements to label Pope Francis disparagingly as a "liberal". They seemed to wish to equate conservatism with parsimony toward the poor as if that group was not worthy of assistance. Time will tell if those same actors focus their animus toward Pope Leo for the same reason.

It also appears since some members of the USCCB are more attuned to politics than others they do not advocate for the rights of the poor, or as Leo stated in Dilexi Te, that all individuals have equal rights. It appears that some demographics from the perspective of several bishops are second class. Unfortunately, the poor are one such demographic. Leo's admonition to the Church seemed more directed to the Church in the United States than elsewhere. He likely is concerned that the USCCB mirrors American politics more so than it mirrors Church principles.

CHARLES A LE GUERN
Granger, Indiana

***